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782 **SACRIFICES IN WESTERN TIBET.** *By the Rev.*

771 **97** Propitiatory sacrifices have always held
609 an important place in the religion practised in Tibet. Human sacrifices were not unknown in ancient times in this country, and even to-day stories are told of foundation sacrifices of humans and animals to ensure buildings and town walls from the attacks of evil spirits.

It is, however, difficult to obtain detailed accounts of this practice, as the Tibetans are very reluctant to relate instances of this to Europeans.

782 Two stories of the last human sacrifices in
173 Lahoul are extant to this day, and as they agree
[14] in every detail with those related by Dr. Francke in his 'History of Western Tibet,' I shall make a somewhat lengthy quotation from this writer's account of them.

[241] "A man had to be killed every year for the "benefit of the fields of the community. The "peasants were to offer the victim in turns. "(They probably kept slaves, and these were "generally killed). One year it was a poor "widow's turn, and as she had no servants it "was understood that her only son was to be "sacrificed. Whilst she was weeping sadly "about this, a wandering hermit came to her "house and offered to die in the place of her "son, if she would feed him well until the day "of execution. The widow gladly accepted the "offer, and on the appointed day the hermit "was led with much noise before the wooden "idol of the god of the fields. When the "executioner walked up with his axe to the "hermit, the latter said: 'Wait a little, dear "'friend; lend me your axe, and let me see if "'the god really wants to take my life.' Then "he stepped with the axe before the idol and "said: 'Well, Lord of the Fields, if you really "'want my life, take it please; if not, I shall "'take yours.' As there was no reply, the "hermit raised his axe and cut the idol in "pieces. Then he threw the fragments into
782 "the river, and everybody went home."

173 The other story related to me concerning
114 the last human sacrifice in Manchat (and which is supported by Dr. Francke's account

782 of it) was that of a woman who was buried
173 alive.
114 Local tradition has it that she pronounced a curse upon the land with her last breath. She prayed that none of the inhabitants should grow older than she was at her death; and the people still believe that her curse is being carried into effect nowadays.

782 In modern times human sacrifices are substituted by animal ones, and in the various valleys of Western Tibet the sacrificial customs, though slightly different in detail, are at any rate uniform in principle.

The method of sacrificing animals is that of making a deep incision sufficiently large to permit the introduction of the hand, and then tearing the heart out, after which that organ is offered to the local deity.

In Kyelang one sheep is sacrified in this way during the spring of each year, each household taking its turn in providing the sacrificial sheep.

At Chugtra, a neighbouring village, the local god is regarded with great fear, and it is thought that no less than twelve sheep, not to mention large quantities of flour and butter, must be offered to this ferocious deity annually.

Eight of these sheep, chosen from the communal flock, are slaughtered simultaneously; their hearts being torn out, and certain savoury parts of the carcases offered to the idol, whilst part is consumed by the people. The remaining four sheep are similarly sacrificed at intervals of one month.

[231] It is also customary, when slaughtering animals for food, to tear the hearts out of them.

At Yanaped, a yak is sacrified triennially. It is first well fed, and then on the day of sacrifice the beast is heavily loaded and driven hither and thither by the people, who abuse it atrociously by throwing stones, clods of earth, or anything they can lay their hands on, until it is reduced to a state of utter exhaustion. It is then seized, and its heart having been torn out, is immolated.

Sheep are frequently similarly dealt with, a plank of wood being securely tied on its back,

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782 and finally sacrificed. At a marriage conducted
585 on a large scale, a sheep is thrown headlong from
782 the roof of a house, and its heart torn out.
Similarly, when sickness occurs threatening the
755 life of the patient, a sheep has to be sacrificed.
782 The animal is covered with a shroud to impersonate a corpse. In the meanwhile, the relations of the sick man call him repeatedly by name, and to the accompaniment of loud lamentations the sheep is led to the cremating ground and burnt alive.

000 Though in theory the taking of life and the

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Though in theory the taking of life and the
779 offering of bloody sacrifices are revolting to the
782 Tibetan Buddhist, the sacrificing of animals goes on unchecked by the Buddhist hierarchy in many parts of Western Tibet.

782 A section of the community, however, reluctant to shed blood when sacrificing to the local deities, makes dough images of animals for sacrificial purposes.

779 With the advance of civilization and education
782 in the secluded valleys of Western Tibet, bloody sacrifices will no doubt sink into the limbo of forgotten things.

[76 (a)]